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Corporate Leadership in The Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

Using the corporate leader's (CL) digital age positioning horizons matrix, the CL can find a unique strategic positioning point that is applicable to their corporate and to their chosen strategic directions within the digital age. This can be as a transformational, a transactional, an authentic or as a matrix-combined leadership approach. This paper suggests digital age leadership is best considered from a matrix-combined leadership approach.

Keywords: digitize, organizational, leadership, technology, strategy

INTRODUCTION

The International Data Corporation (<https://www.idc.com/>) suggest before the end of 2017 two-thirds of global 2000 businesses are likely to have digital-transformation embedded into their core corporate strategies. The digital age brings new challenges for corporate leaders (CLs). The 'in-demand' skills and knowledge that leaders can deploy to transition the successes of today's corporates across tomorrow's digitally-disruptive domains are both wide-ranging and diverse [19].

Today's leading edge CLs (including Apple, Samsung, Rio Tinto, Tesla, and BMW) are encapsulating the digital environment. These CLs often focused towards a strong global market positioning, and as such their corporates are usually substantive, financially-solid, technically-astute, operationally-organized, suitably-resourced, and workforce effective. Each CLs chosen strategies set embracing digitization, innovation and latest disruptive technologies offers pathways towards new efficiencies, and towards new connectivities solutions that instantly interlink the corporate's value networks directly to their individual global consumers.

These leading edge CLs recognize being a market leader offers their corporate both financial, and consumer-reach benefits. Hence, their corporate often focuses towards corporate-wide, rapid: (1) intelligent connectivities [6][12][42], (2) instantaneous informative diffusions of knowledge [38][42], (3) complex change transparencies, (4) innovations delivery through leading edge research and development against latest output products, (5) corporate precision [6][12][42], (6) innovative corporate hierarchical dissolutions [18][19] across internal workforce and external servicing, (7) workforce efficiencies that align human capital, and (8) customerization [16][17] and diversification into new markets.

Harnessed correctly, these 'blue ocean' strategies [27], allow the CL to continually reframe their leading-edge global corporates as value deliverers into their targeted global societies. Most leading-edge corporates reside within the world's industrialized nations. Consumers recognize such corporates meet ethical standards and abide by global regulatory standards. This trust means a consumer from a distant place can perceive a low risk in buying from this corporate's latest product or service offerings [22]. Hence, the CLs ability to quickly interpret, and astutely direct, although within the normal scope of exiting steady-state corporate governance must now react quickly to today's accelerating rate of emerging technologies [7].

Future CLs likely require still greater suites of digital skills – possibly fusing substantive technologies understanding with astute consumer alignment [6][21] and dynamic financial modelling [26]. These CLs may further align such outcome areas as corporate responsive and changeable strategies - geared specifically to generate successes across their chaotic, disruptive and increasingly-digital operational domains.

Future CLs are likely to rely less on their past knowledge (such as an option to repeat a version of a past success). Instead, they are likely to be sharp dynamic thinkers – planning and energizing others, patterning and exciting solutions, positioning and delivering edge, perceiving and executing strategies, and delivering overall passionate ploys (; Walsh,). In addition these future CLs are likely to be highly technologies savvy, innovations drivers, and ones who perceptively interpret the fickleness of the corporate's global consumer markets.

How these digitally savvy CLs then digitize their leading edge corporate can also influence successes and/or failures. Another complicating factor to the CL is the emergence of new game changing business models such as Uber to the taxi industry, scramjets to flight transportation, new industry-reframing technologies such as 3D printing into construction, robotics into surgery and nursing, and nano-tech and genetic solutions into medicine. Hence, with corporate agility now an essential component of the CLs governance toolkit, which leadership styles are likely applicable to future CLs as they seek to advance their corporate into and through future digitization game changes.

LEADERSHIP STYLES

Today researchers typically view CLs as managing complex, internal and external digitally-changing domains. Three predominate leadership styles are gaining preference.

Transformational leaders

Transformational, business-reinventing CLs: exert an idealized influence [8][43], provide inspiration [10], imbue intellectual stimulation [28] and exert individualized considerations [3][4][9] across their corporate's business transforming options. They also frame perceptive, persuasive and pervasive visionary directionally-driven innovations pathways to move the corporate to a new frame of success reference.

Transactional leaders

The transactional, values-based CLs display a behaviourally-focused and human capital motivation perspective. They recognise a collaborative approach [31] can deliver a degree of competitive advantage [13]. They recognise this value-laden component [32][34][37] can: increase capital productivity reduce investment costs [11], build collaboration [40], and drive competitiveness [5]. They bring trust, loyalty and integrity into their corporate and its workforce. Here, complex ideas are generated through workforce encouragement to co-create initiatives, and through workforce empowerment to build change [25]. The corporate is talent-aligned towards specifically transacting with each external consumer.

Authentic leaders

The authentic CL is a self-aware and enduring organisation builder [15][41] who balances analysis against scenario solutions [2][38][41], and who builds transparent, genuine, decision-making situational solutions[2][42]. The authentic CL is morally-aligned towards transparent corporate and workforce-aligned values deliverance [36], but is also a thorough, rational and rigorous financial decision-maker.

Each CLs pursues a competitiveness position and this often delivers organizational change [30]. The speed of organizational change is affected by the corporate's agility capabilities, and these interconnect with its digital-technologies and cloud data inclusions. Such digitized inclusions can build corporate change-convergency [14], and/or create corporate change-divergency [38] and/or cater for external (or internal) digitally disruptive forces [19].

DIGITIZATION

Digitization encompasses disruptive technologies, digital transformations and digital change [19]. Each digitization area may be viewed across a broad range of perspectives, but each can also be grouped under a suite of digitizing constructs such as those outlined below. The first four groupings largely fit within the transformational leadership domain, the next two groupings are largely within the authentic leadership realm, and the last two groupings are associated primarily with transactional leadership encounters.

Intelligent connectivities

Chew [12], [6] and Westerman et al. [42] include interactions and communicative channels [7]. These connectivities enhance knowledge sharing. They generate efficiencies and effective options through enhanced business value (performance, quality, economic-value, servicing, satisfiers) [20] capture. Their business intelligence releases new innovation and creativity ideas, and these ideas channels and network across the value chain [35][39].

Instantaneous informative diffusions

Westerman et al. [42] and Rogers [38] enable the CL to interactively-collate and then interpret governance decision-making into a near real-time diffusion process [7][14][28] This decision-making is supported by corporate internet-of-things and cloud knowledge capture across smart business analytics systems.

Complex change transparencies

Ben-Hur [5] brings competitiveness into the CLs consistent governance perspective into driving broad, intelligent, attuned corporate-wide decisions.

Innovations delivery

Mithas, Tafti and Mitchell [33] see innovation as the CLs agility and enabling directions that then swiftly-generate: imaginative focused suites of new products, new services and knowledge, and greater first-mover profits [11][23].

Corporate hierarchical dissolutions

These enable the CL to shorten their information channels and to remove selected middle manager levels [19] who often filter the operational level information from their CL [42]. This strategic alignment of business and IT [24] shortens and directs information channelling, and so offers increased corporate performance opportunities.

Corporate precision

Chew [12], Berman and Marshall [6] and Westerman et al. [42] use collated analysis drawn from cloud knowledge sources to frame faster, high-integrity decision making options for the CL.

Workforce collaboration

Iansiti and Levien [25], Lhuer et al. [31]; Mahoney and Kor [32]; Molloy and Barney [34] and Ployhart [37] build the CLs toolkit to align the corporate's human capital into a single, effective and united channel.

Customerization

Hamilton [16][17] dynamically assess each consumer's digital business engagement activities - and then individually provides the business digital offerings that most closely align to the prior actions or requirements of this consumer. This transactional (e & m commerce) approach draws business and consumers into a digitally-connected interdependency [6] – where all and everything are mutually interdependent.

TODAY'S CL APPROACHES

Today researchers typically view CLs as managing complex, digitally- changing organizations. The three leadership styles transactional values-based, transformational business-reinvention, and authentic self-aware enduring organization builds show preference. These leadership styles each making different contributions, and they do not have to be mutually exclusive. Hence, future leading edge CLs can develop their strategies separately (as pure transactional, pure transformational or pure authentic) or by incorporating aspects of all three leadership styles. To help understand the complexities facing today's CLs and their ongoing corporate digitalizing considerations we map these leadership styles as three separate dimensions, and present them as a Figure 1 CL digital age positioning horizons model.

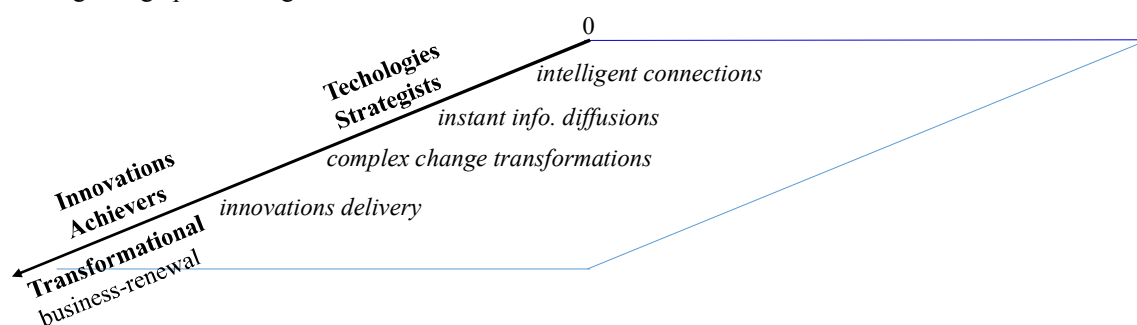


Figure 1: Transformational CL digital age positioning

Considered in isolation, Figure 1's CL transformational approaches in the digital age suggests the corporate's strategic approaches can be levelled to a degree (but with overlap). The easy solutions are the builds of intelligent connections across the value chain and into cloud databases these collectively can build further intelligences and can contribute to corporate agility and relative competitive positioning. Stepping these up by adding vast sets of sensory internet-of things (IoT) devices can in combination provide interconnecting analyses across the value chains of the corporate and deliver instant information diffusion within the corporate. Where this approach is applied across the entire corporate business process reengineering, through to a full roboticized Industrie 4.0 solution is achievable. The highest level of transformation CL approaches is when the corporate leads the Gartner hype cycle and works to become an innovations achiever. Here the corporate pursues a competitive advantage as it commercializes its hype cycle innovations into new corporate products, services or disruptive systems.

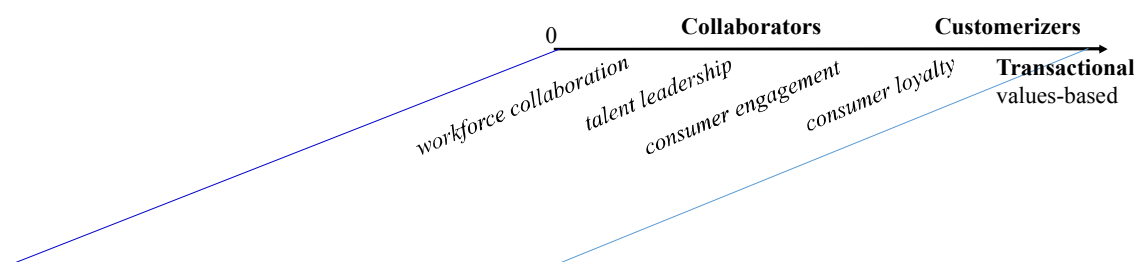


Figure 2: Transactional CL digital age positioning

Figure 2's CL transactional approaches in the digital age are human capital focused. Internally as new technologies are added over-time the nature of work changes and new structures and staff roles emerge within the operational realm. With astute talent leadership, the CL can establish cost savings, and can drive a new e-business solution for the corporate. These hierarchical, talent-based, human capital reductions, and e-business solutions save on costs, improve communications and speed CL decision making processes. Extending the human capital interactions through to the consumer generates a new behavioural approach where motivation to transact delivers a suite of consumption consumer-assessing processes. This leads to the consumer

reflecting across their satisfaction, trust and loyalty transactions gratification suite [20][21]. With these links in place e-commerce and m-commerce are both achievable.

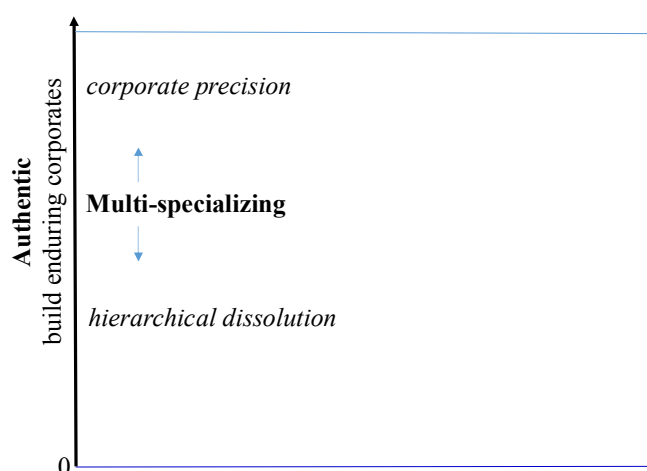


Figure 3: Authentic CL digital age positioning

Figure 3's CL authentic approaches to digital age leadership applied internally are designed to build an enduring corporate. Here, as new processes or operations or technologies add to the existing systems over-time, the nature of work tasks changes. Often, role assessments lead to a smaller operational workforce, and fewer managers (and levels of management). These can be further refined as shorter communications channels are developed across the corporate [18][19]. Internal and external business systems refinements can deliver higher degrees of corporate precision and so allow the CL to make swifter, more-astute, and more-timely decisions.

DIGITAL AGE CL APPROACHES

Kotter [29] recognized that transformational and transactional leadership were related and could be split into four quadrants based on the degree of change needed and the complexity of the corporation. With these two leadership domains related it is also likely that authentic leadership can be similarly related to transformational leadership and/or to transactional leadership. Hence, as the future corporate digitizes and moves further into the digital age, these three CL approaches can be viewed as operating in combination as shown in Table 2s CL digital age positioning horizons matrix.

Figure 4's 3D space 2 shows that a high-level transactional CL can bring a strong values-based perspective to the corporate. In the CLs pursuit of future commercial and transactional business solutions a behaviorally-focused and consumer-focused approach can be delivered - displaying integrity, trust, and loyalty to both the corporate and the workforce. In this approach the CL can generate complex ideas through the co-creation of workforce and consumer initiatives [25].

From a business renewal or transformational perspective this same CL can be digitally attuned – adding selected digital age IoT pursuits into their precise business change practices. They can move the corporate into an Industrie 4.0 technologies driven approach, and can support this drive by renewing the corporate with emergent innovations that are developing internally into commercially valuable corporate achievements.

This CL can use their background capabilities and experiences to generate multi-specialist approaches that ensure the corporate's workforce remains appropriately levelled and suitable for the changing transformational and transaction emergent approaches. This precision focused approach is a multi-specialist dimensional approach, and it applies across the corporate and it is throughout its value chain.

The degree to which they engage each of these positioning skills may vary from CL to CL. For example a different CL may deem that their corporate only needs to deliver strategies that fit within Figure 4's 3D space 1. This is also a cheaper, less-complex and quicker-to-implement strategic solution. Thus each CL can potentially map their corporate into a unique 3D strategic position - one that they devise as being able to generate a net profitable and net competitive position in the timeframe they select.

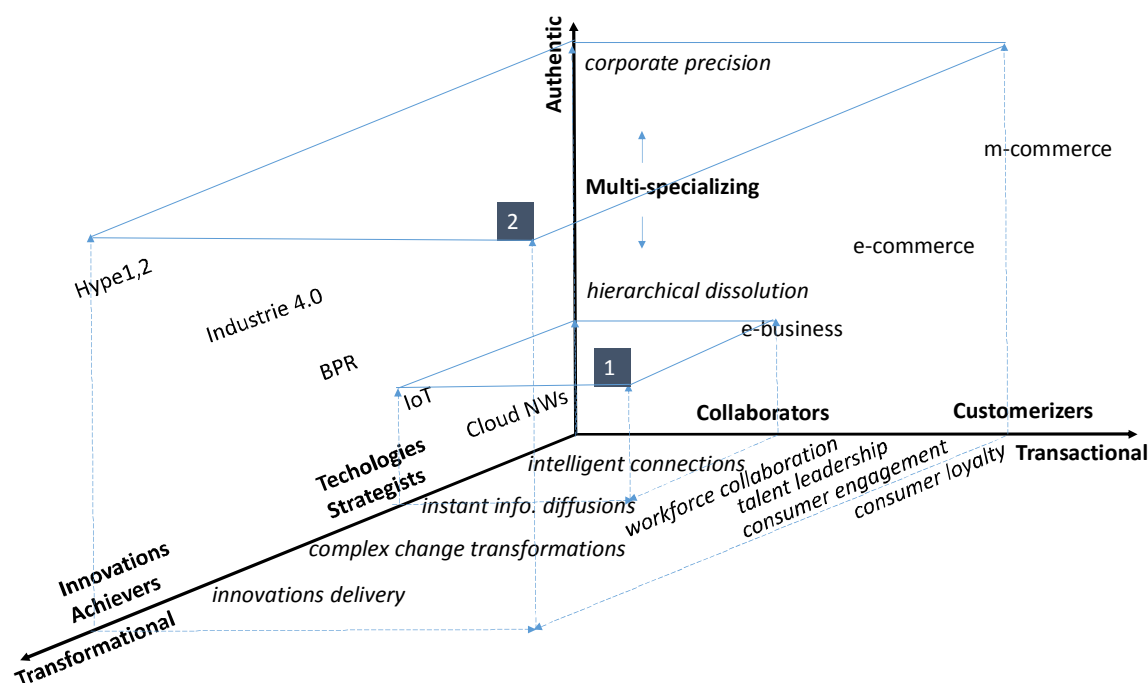


Figure 4: CL digital age positioning horizons matrix

CONCLUSION

This paper suggests as the corporate progresses into the digital age its CL can operate from a transformational, a transactional, an authentic or as a matrix-combined approach. It further suggests digital age corporate leadership is best considered from a matrix-combined leadership approach. Here, the CL can enlist Figure 4 to locate a unique future strategic positioning point. This 'CL digital age positioning horizons matrix' target should be both applicable and aligned to the CLs and the corporate's capabilities. It should help clarify the complexities and the dimensions of digital age leadership. In conjunction with a skills audit it should clarify where the corporate needs to up-skill or the redefine its human capital requirements. Thus, the CL can find a unique strategic positioning point that is applicable to their corporate, and to their chosen strategic directions, within the digital age.

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